



**Mississippi Commission on Children's Justice
Children's Hope Blueprint for Mississippi**

September 2020

"Hope is the belief that our future can be better than our past, and that we have a role to play in making that future a reality." – Dr. Chan Hellman, PhD, University of Oklahoma¹



MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE
Mississippi Supreme Court
450 High Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Mississippi families and those who serve them,

We are in the middle of a very exciting time for Mississippi's history—particularly in regard to the state's child welfare system. Mississippi is seeing remarkable decreases of children in state custody as well as an uptick in collaboration across sectors. Nearly everyone leading these agencies and efforts are working together with a renewed sense of excitement.

And one word is responsible for it: hope.

Over the past two years, members of the state's Commission on Children's Justice have encountered increasing research in the way of hope theory and how it can offset some of the damage created by trauma at the hands of the child welfare system. The Commission has put together this living document to serve as a call to action to keep hope theory front and center in our work. We also hope that this document serves to unify providers and volunteers across the board in Mississippi's desires to uplift children, youth, and families. This document will be updated regularly with new research, goals, and state-specific data.

We want this document to encourage you as much as it is used as a tool of accountability among those at the table.

Sincerely,

*Justice Dawn Beam
Mississippi Supreme Court
Commission Co-Chair
MS Family First Initiative Co-Chair*

*Judge Thomas Broome
Rankin County Judge
Commission Co-Chair*

*Judge Rhea Sheldon
Chancellor, 10th District
Commission Co-Chair*

*First Lady Elee Reeves
Office of the Governor
MS Family First Initiative Co-Chair*

*Commissioner Taylor Cheeseman
MS Dept. of Child Protection Services*

*Director Bob Anderson
MS Dept. of Human Services*

¹ Chan Hellman, "Hope As A Light In The Darkness During Transitions", 2020.

Table of Contents

Overview and Approach	4
Mississippi’s Commission on Children’s Justice	5
Mission Statement	5
Membership.....	5
The Charge for System Change	6
A Direction for Hope.....	7
The Science of Hope	8
The Hope Mindset.....	9
A Culture of Collaboration	9
Youth Engagement and Constituent Voice	9
Parent Representation in Mississippi	10
Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services Strategic Direction	10
Mississippi Family First Initiative.....	12
Programs of HOPE	12
The Hope Toolset	13
1) Sequential Intercept Model Mapping.....	13
2) Community Opportunity Maps.....	14
3) The Hope Score Survey.....	14
Moving the Needle on Community Collaboration	15
Operating principles	15
Keys to Success.....	15
Keys to Thriving.....	16
PHASES OF WORK	17
I. Investigative Phase: Framing and Focusing Our Work.....	17
II. Issues and Opportunities Identification Phase: Clarifying Our Vision	17
III. Strategy Development Phase: Creating an Actionable Plan	17
Next Steps	18
RESOURCE MAPPING.....	18
CCJ CENTRAL WEBSITE.....	18
APPENDIX A.....	19
APPENDIX B.....	23

Overview and Approach

For the past two years, Mississippi has made remarkable strides in the child welfare system. The number of children in state custody was reduced by nearly a third.² Mississippi is third in the country for its safe reduction of children in state custody – opposite the trend for many other states that are seeing an increase of children in custody.³ It is an exciting milestone in the child welfare journey that cross-sector advocates in Mississippi can point to and celebrate. However, there is still much work to be done to improve the system. To memorialize these efforts, the state is publishing this Children's Hope Blueprint for Mississippi. This plan is a joint project of the Mississippi Supreme Court Commission on Children's Justice (CCJ) and the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (MDCPS).

This Blueprint is first and foremost a living document that seeks to clarify and prioritize what Mississippians want to see and commit to concerning the well-being of vulnerable children and youth.

This Blueprint is first and foremost a living document that seeks to clarify and prioritize what Mississippians want to see and commit to concerning the well-being of vulnerable children and youth. It is also a call to the larger community to develop broader partnerships, set attainable goals, employ data driven decision-making, and engage in bolder strategies. Our challenge is to move beyond fragmented approaches, toward meaningful and sustainable collaboration and accountability. Such collaboration will be modeled at the state level to provide infrastructure, inspiration, and support to local, community-led collaboratives. The Blueprint is an invitation to the community to make a commitment to vulnerable Mississippi children and youth by working collaboratively to achieve the plan's desired outcomes.

This Blueprint is intended as a vehicle to bring together diverse constituencies in a collective process to establish shared priorities, align strategies, and expand collective impact at the state- and community-levels. Created on behalf of the diverse membership of these principal entities, this plan reflects the values that are most deeply held by state and community leaders working to protect children and promote family well-being in Mississippi and serves as a structured approach to guide intervention efforts in those positive directions. At the most fundamental level, this Blueprint is intended as a roadmap to connect vulnerable children and youth in Mississippi with needed resources, thereby allowing them to thrive.

² MDCPS FY 2019 Data

³ MDCPS FY 2019 Data, May 2020 Joint Planning Meeting

Mississippi's Commission on Children's Justice⁴

The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Commission on Children's Justice (CCJ) in April 2006. The initial work of the Commission laid the groundwork for the Supreme Court's adoption of Uniform Rules of Youth Court Practice. The Supreme Court reestablished the Commission in June 2010. After more than three years of study of the state's child protection systems, the Commission made recommendations in a report presented to the Supreme Court on December 12, 2013. Each year, the Court receives an annual federal Court Improvement Plan Grant, earmarked for the improvement of Mississippi's Youth Court system. A requirement for the receipt of the funds is that an advisory group be utilized to assist in the identification of areas needing improvement in the children's justice area, as well as making recommendations for applicable improvement and monitoring of those areas and monitoring the implementation of the recommended reforms.

The CCJ has established many subcommittees and efforts in furtherance of this charge. These ventures include: Parent Representation Task Force, Mississippi Family First Initiative (MFFI), and the Programs of HOPE (POH).

Mission Statement

The Mississippi Supreme Court charged the Commission on Children's Justice with developing a statewide comprehensive approach to improving the child welfare system; coordinating the three branches of government in assessing the impact of government actions on children who are abused or neglected; and recommending changes to improve children's safety, strengthen and support families and promote public trust and confidence in the child welfare system.

Membership

Justice Dawn H. Beam, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of Mississippi, Commission Co-Chair;
 Judge Latrice Westbrooks, Mississippi Court of Appeals;
 Judge Tom Broome, County Court Judge, Rankin County, Commission Co-Chair;
 Judge Rhea Sheldon, Chancery Judge 10th District, Commission Co-Chair;
 Constituent Consultants representing the voice of youth, parents, family, and foster families;
 Randy G. Pierce, Executive Director of the Mississippi Judicial College;
 David Calder, Director of Children's Advocacy Clinic, University of Mississippi Law School;
 Shirley Kennedy, Director of Children's Advocacy Program, Mississippi College School of Law;
 Dr. Scott Benton, Professor of Pediatrics, Director, Division of Forensic Medicine, Medical Director, Children's Safe Center, University of Mississippi Medical Center;
 Dr. Beverly Bryant, Chair, Department of Child Psychology, University of Mississippi Medical Center;
 Angela Robertson, Associate Director and Research Professor, Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University;
 Dr. Lisa Nored, Chair, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Southern Mississippi;
 Paula Broome, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Victims Assistance, Mississippi Office of the Attorney General;
 Craig Robertson, Co-Founder of 200 Million Flowers;
 Amy Wilson, Executive Director, CASA Mississippi;
 Bob Anderson, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Human Services;
 Taylor Cheeseman, Commissioner, Department of Child Protection Services;
 Lyndsy Irwin, Director of Child Support Enforcement, Mississippi Department of Human Services;

⁴ *In re: Commission on Children's Justice*, (Miss. 2019). Appendix A

Toni Kersh, Bureau Director, Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement, Mississippi Department of Education;
Judge Sharon Sigalas, County Court and Youth Court Judge, Jackson County;
Judge Vel Young-Graham, County Court and Youth Court Judge, Lauderdale County;
Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, Chancellor of the First Chancery District of Mississippi;
Judge Kevin Briscoe, Chief Justice, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;
Judge Holly Denson, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;
Ginger Mathis Miller, County Attorney, Tate County;
Karla Tye, Executive Director, Mississippi Children's Advocacy Centers;
Devon Loggins, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi United Methodist Children's Homes;
John Damon, Director, Canopy Children's Solutions; Angelique C. White, Guardian Ad Litem, Gulfport, Mississippi;
Nicole McLaughlin, Executive Director of the Access to Justice Commission and Director of MS Bar's Access to Justice Initiative;
Andre deGruy, Office of the State Public Defender;
Judge John Hudson, Jurist in Residence, Mississippi Supreme Court.

The Charge for System Change

Common values, shared vision, and aligned strategies have, in certain ways, created a system that now must be put to work in furtherance of its own goals and to maximize positive impact for vulnerable populations throughout Mississippi. Despite recent system gains, much work remains to be done in Mississippi to improve the well-being of vulnerable children and families. At one level of analysis, the record decrease in the state's foster care population can be understood fairly as a correction for past over-utilization.⁵ Sustaining that improvement direction will require significant intentional effort and locally-targeted strategies. Even in counties with the highest safe reduction rates, removal and in-care rates remain high relatively-speaking.⁶ Five counties are experiencing *growth* in foster care, some by astonishing percentage increases.⁷ And, as has historically been true, the majority of removals of children to foster care are for reasons of neglect (69%), not more serious accounts of abuse.⁸ These dynamics invite critical examination of whether resources are being focused on the greatest safety concerns and what options might exist to address the needs of families in more effective ways.

This Blueprint is intended to give direction to this evolution through guided, purposeful steps to improve the well-being of vulnerable children and youth in a range of outcome areas by:

- Supporting vulnerable populations
- Using a range of approaches that include problem reduction, prevention, preparation and engagement
- Ensuring adequate supports that include caring adults, safe places, healthy starts, and effective education and opportunities
- Implementing effective change strategies that will align policies and resources, engage youth and families, and improve systems, services and programs
- Engaging all stakeholders which includes parents and youth, educators, funders, advocates, providers, religious institutions, businesses, and government
- Establishing shared commitment and responsibility for change efforts

⁵ MDCPS FY2019

⁶ (Casey Family Programs to provide citations)

⁷ (Casey Family Programs to provide citations)

⁸ (Casey Family Programs to provide citations)

Deeper, more intentional collaboration and coordination of existing efforts is needed through the integration of strategies and approaches. Currently, the MFFI and the formal child welfare system are serving limited populations with specific interventions, yet both desire significant change at community-wide and statewide levels. That magnitude of change requires more than alignment. It requires intentional and purposeful integration – of the visions, strategies, and plans held by agencies, organizations, and initiatives – and critical interrogation of existing efforts – through evaluation and youth engagement and constituent voice. The result will be greater clarity of role, authority, and task, all of which will be memorialized to create a stable and sustainable structure for continued impact.

A Direction for Hope

The impact of trauma on children lasts a lifetime. This truth has been proven time and time again through years of research. Most referenced is the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente's Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study.⁹ In fact, it is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect. The study demonstrates a proven pattern of negative impact on later-in-life well-being and health related to traumatic instances of abuse and neglect in children. According to the ACEs study, children are exponentially more likely to develop disease or early death when they experience four or more adverse experiences during childhood – such as physical or sexual abuse, household challenges like substance abuse or mental illness in the home, or neglect. However, not all children with an ACE score of four or higher will experience psychological or physical distress.¹⁰ Further, it is widely acknowledged within the scientific and legal communities that separation from biological families causes significant harm to children.¹¹ Child welfare providers have a responsibility to minimize and mitigate these instances of trauma—both within the home and throughout the child welfare system experience.

Childhood trauma and the impact it has on adult health is quickly becoming an issue of public health concern. In an effort to understand why some children with traumatic histories fair better than others later in life, scientists have studied many theories regarding mitigating circumstances. One theory as to why adverse childhood experiences do not consistently have the same on children is called the Hope Theory. Since 1994, psychologists have studied the impact of goal-oriented hope through an equation featuring the execution of agency and the use of pathways to equal the desired outcome. More recent work in the field has focused on hope's impact in relation to childhood trauma and adverse experiences – specifically, how hope can offset the health risks of ACE scores.

⁹https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Facestudy%2Fabout.html

¹⁰ Ricky T. Munoz, Heather Hanks, and Chan M. Hellman, "Hope and Resilience as Distinct Contributors to Psychological Flourishing Among Childhood Trauma Survivors," Green Cross Academy of Traumatology, 2019.

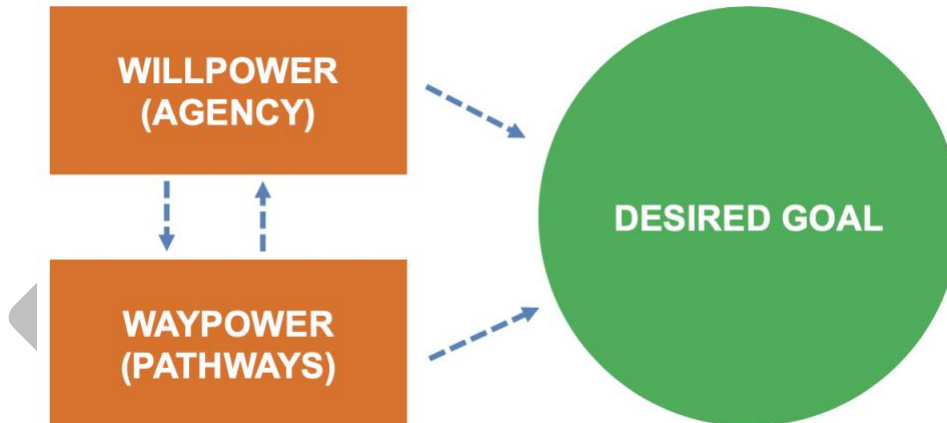
¹¹ "Trauma Caused by Separation of Children from Parents," (2020). The American Bar Association published this memo in 2018 and updates it regularly. It cites many scientific and legal authorities, studies, and articles demonstrating the traumatic impact of familial separation.

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/committees/childrens-rights/trauma-caused-by-separation-of-children-from-parents/>

The CCJ adopts this theory on hope and is working to employ this mindset among child welfare providers as well as within participants within the child welfare system. The impact of implementing hope theory is two-fold: 1) hope mitigates the risks present in existing trauma—incidents that cannot be erased because they have already occurred and 2) hope prevents trauma from occurring, therefore shrinking the number of individuals with an ACE score of four or higher and increasing their likelihood of avoiding associated health risks.

The Science of Hope

One of the first introductions to the science of hope was through a book called *Hope Rising*—written by Casey Gwinn and Dr. Chan Hellman.¹² The book references clinical psychologist C.R. Snyder and his theory of hope. Much of Snyder's theory centers around human action and how most actions involve a desired outcome. In order to achieve that outcome, a person must have both agency and pathways. Agency is the “willpower” a person possesses—their desire and motivation to achieve the outcome. Pathways make up the “way-power” for a person. A pathway enables the person to achieve the desired goal. There can be multiple pathways to the goal. A pathway might become impeded—something might go wrong that makes that pathway obsolete in accomplish the goal. A person with hope can find new pathways, similar to a detour in roadwork, to their original goal after encountering the impediment. People without hope are unable to forge new pathways. A hypothesis within the MFFI's efforts is that strategic, collaborative resources can give people more pathways to achieve their desired goal.



Today, much of Dr. Hellman's work is focused around the mitigation of traumatic effects on health through the use of hope theory. The Hope Research Center—based out of Tulsa, Oklahoma and a part of the University of Oklahoma's psychology department—dedicates its time and resources in studying the impact of hope and teaching others how to use this theory to improve lives. The CCJ is in the process of adopting Dr. Hellman's theories and is considering potential partnerships with the Hope Research Center to implement these techniques throughout Mississippi's child welfare system.

¹² Casey Gwinn and Chan Hellmann, *Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life* (2018).

The Hope Mindset

This Blueprint is based on a shared set of overarching principled outcomes that are intended to guide the development of strategies centered around the theory of hope. When considering, developing, and directing strategies, subcommittee members must remain mindful of and committed to the following:

All Children and Youth Will...

What will Mississippi's hope framework be in relation to the CCJ's desired overarching principled outcomes?

A Culture of Collaboration

A culture of collaboration has taken root in Mississippi, the evidence of which is found in the numerous initiatives and innovative programs dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children, youth, and families throughout the state. The high ideal of collaboration is also paramount to which this plan and the work it sets forth is committed.

Youth Engagement and Constituent Voice

One of the highest values embraced by this Blueprint are the inclusion of the authentic voice and perspective of those who are experts by experience – people who have first-hand understanding of how the child welfare system works and valuable insight vital to improving it. It is impossible to make positive, informed policy change without input from the very Mississippians these policies impact. This sentiment has been captured in policy work throughout the years by the phrase “Nothing about us, without us.” Each phase of work outlined herein will be informed purposefully by the children, youth, parents and guardians who have lived experience with the child welfare system.

The commitment to the deep involvement of children, youth, and parents is shared by the CCJ and MDCPS. Integrating authentic voices at the system level brings a clearer focus to problem identification and to strategies developed to address issues. Engagement of children, youth, parents and caregivers with lived experience ensures that the focus of decision-making remains centered on the benefit to the families within the child welfare system and not on institutional concerns or system priorities. It is for these reasons

that MDCPS is pursuing proven strategies for systemic parental voice, increasing family engagement, and reimagining foster care as a support for families. Likewise, the CCJ through its MFFI and the recently launched Programs of HOPE subcommittees is working diligently to

“Nothing about us, without us.” Each phase of work outlined herein will be informed purposefully by the children, youth, parents and caregivers who have lived experience with the child welfare system.

identify and engage members with lived experience. These efforts will look to the Mississippi Youth Voice Initiative, the Mission First Legal Aid Office at the Mississippi College School of Law, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health Peer Support Program, Casey Family Programs, and others to develop an advisory structure and processes that integrate the authentic voices of youth, parents, and caregivers.

Parent Representation in Mississippi

The course for collaboration was further charted by the work to expand and improve legal representation for parents in civil abuse and neglect cases undertaken by the Parent Representation Task Force since 2012. The Task Force began as collaboration between the Judiciary (and particularly, the Court Improvement Project), Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services, Casey Family Programs, University of Mississippi School of Law, Mississippi College School of Law Mission First Legal Aid Office, the American Bar Association, Mississippi Center for Legal Services, Mississippi Attorney General's Office, and the Mississippi Judicial College. The effort began with four sites which soon expanded to six. After 2016, the Kellogg Foundation and the Office of State Public Defender joined the effort. As a result of this collective effort additional state funding has been appropriated. In 2018, the Parent Representation Task Force became institutionalized through the Mississippi Children's Justice Commission. It continues to meet quarterly, and a Strategic Leadership Team was created in 2019 to provide direction for expansion of the program.

As significant as these results, the trusting relationships and expertise that arose from the success of the parent representation strategy have inspired related efforts. One recent and visible example is the MFFI.

Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services Strategic Direction

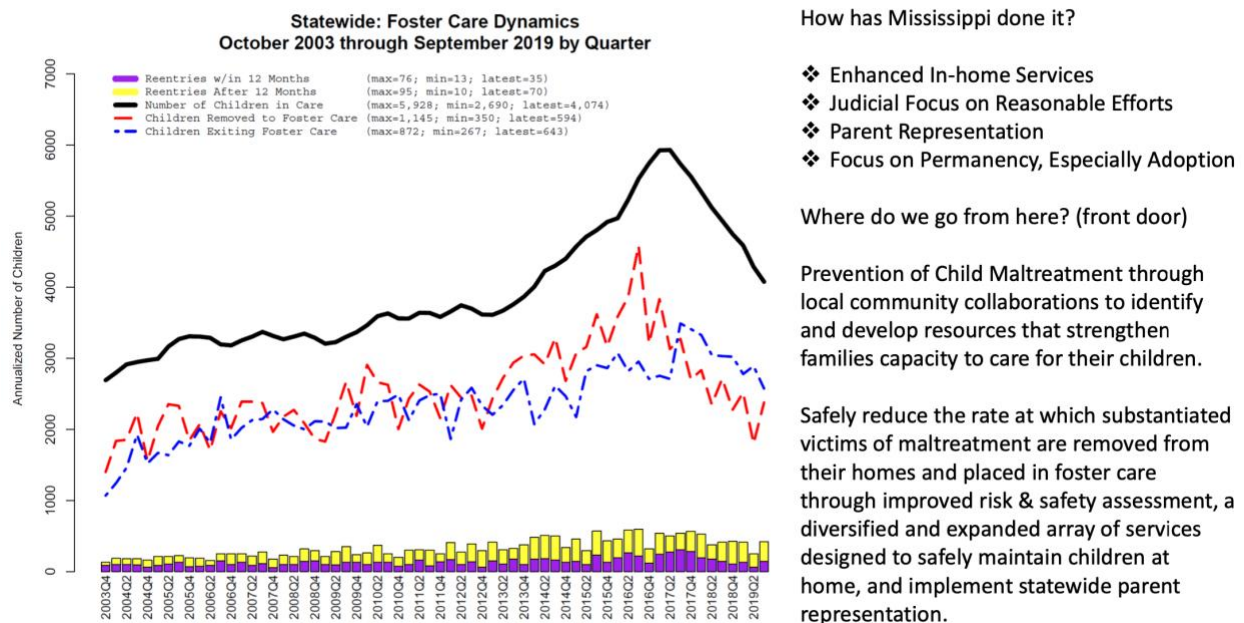
Effective collaborations have energized the performance of Mississippi's child welfare system, created service capacity, and contributed in meaningful and significant ways to improved outcomes for children and families. Due to efforts by government and private community partners, Mississippi has achieved a notable – and safe – reduction of the number of children in its foster care system over recent years. On March 31, 2017, there were 5,986 children in foster care, the most since 2003 (which is earliest data available).¹³ On September 31, 2019, there were 4,047 children in foster care (which is the most recent data available). That decrease represents a 32% reduction in the number of children in foster care in 2.5 years and far outpaces the national trend.¹⁴ This dramatic decline is driven by several factors working in collaboration. First, during this time MDCPS, through the agency's "Safe at Home" effort, began focusing practice on preventing abuse and neglect, avoiding unnecessary disruption and system-induced trauma, pursuing safe and lasting permanent family connection, and ensuring Mississippi's children live healthy, supported, and productive lives. The Safe at Home philosophy has led to the enhancement of in-home services, including both family preservation and post-reunification

¹³ (Casey Family Programs to provide citations)

¹⁴ (Casey Family Programs to provide citations)

supports; the development and launch of a Practice Model Learning Cycle; streamlined processes and quality assurance for termination of parental rights cases. Second, the judiciary provided extensive training and focus on courts making meaningful reasonable efforts findings relative to whether the agency conducted reasonable efforts to prevent removal and later to complete permanency. Further, the judiciary trained on safety verses risk and the trauma caused to children by removal to emphasize the need to maintain children in their own homes, if possible. Third, the provision of parent representation spread to many other counties covering almost 70% of Mississippi's population directly impacting reduction rates.

The agency is now positioned to build on the strength of these gains and focus on the following areas of practice needing improvement: family engagement, assessment, and service array and delivery. MDCPS's strategic plans and processes in these priority areas, to include the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), the Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (CFSR PIP) and the Safe at Home Strategic Plan, align with the strategic direction of the Children's Justice Commission as operationalized through initiatives like the Parent Representation Task Force and the MFFI.



The strategies memorialized in the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) include:

1. Prevent child maltreatment through local community collaboration to identify and develop resources that strengthen families' capacity to care for their children.
2. Safely reduce the rate at which substantiated victims of maltreatment are removed from their homes and placed in foster care through improved risk and safety assessments, a diversified and expanded array of services designed to safely maintain children at home, and implementation of statewide parent representation.
3. Increase the percentage of children entering foster care who achieve timely and lasting permanency, preferably through reunification.

Mississippi Family First Initiative

In July 2018, the Commission on Children's Justice launched the MFFI, a local, judicially-led, community collaborative focused on connecting the needs of children and families with available local resources. An arm of the CCJ, the MFFI established a vision to promote safe, stable, and self-sufficient families for Mississippi's children, one family and one community at a time through a fully integrated model in which the courts, nonprofit organizations, churches, and state and local agencies are interconnected in furtherance of better outcomes for children and families. The initiative is comprised of stakeholders at a state level down to community level—guided by local judges. This model allows the service needs of children and their parents to be identified early and met with targeted services provided in community-based settings with the support of child-serving agencies and legal institutions.

Through a planning process, eight pilot sites were initially established through the MFFI, in Lee, Bolivar, Rankin, Madison, Hinds, Pearl River, Jackson, and Lauderdale counties. Each participating pilot site undertook a local needs assessment and, on the basis of findings from that assessment, developed local action plans based on priorities for change. The local action plans identified needs related to broad socio-economic issues such as poverty and education. They also included needs related to local service and resource capacity such as substance abuse treatment, adequate housing, in-home parenting training, mental health care, employment and job training, and transportation. Systemic issues—such as criminal justice reform—were also highlighted. Strategies for addressing these needs were developed and employed by the local collaboratives, which reported a range of activities in the first year of the MFFI. Pilot sites reported and celebrated successes across several general direct service themes, including mitigating risk of child maltreatment by addressing concrete needs arising in families; responding to unmet civil legal needs of parents through pro se clinics and expungement clinics; and providing vocational skills training and adult education to promote self-sufficiency. The relationships forged through the collaborative design also fostered higher levels of coordination among professionals, who created service continuums and community resource fairs.

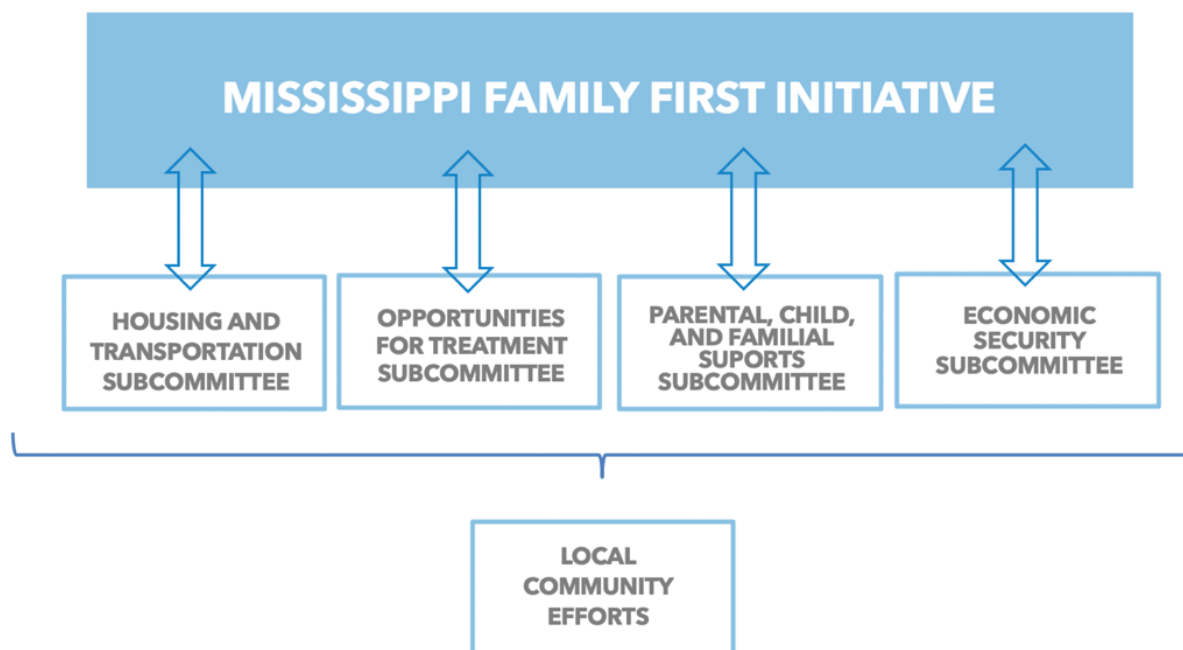
By engaging communities in the development of collaborative strategies to deliver localized services that strengthen families, the MFFI built service capacity in every region of the state and powered change by catalyzing and nurturing relationships. The capacity that now exists at the local level is a resource that can be leveraged by the formal child welfare system, which shares the aim of the MFFI to prevent child maltreatment and the unnecessary removal of children to foster care.¹⁵

Programs of HOPE

The next phase of the MFFI will continue to foster a network of inter-disciplinary stakeholders through the introduction of a new structure. Subcommittees have been established to advance the "Programs of HOPE." Each group includes members who represent, lead, or

¹⁵ The vision adopted by MDCPS is for Mississippi's children to "grow up in strong families safe from harm and supported through partnerships that promote family stability and permanency." The agency's mission is "[T]o lead Mississippi's efforts in keeping children and youth safe and thriving by: strengthening families; preventing child abuse, neglect and exploitation; and promoting child and family well-being and permanent family connections."

specialize in the HOPE focus areas: **H**ousing and Transportation; **O**pportunities for Treatment; **P**arent, Child and Family Supports; **E**conomic Security. Through creative thinking and collective problem solving, leaders will work together to identify and recommend actions that can fill gaps, strengthen opportunities, and lift up Mississippi families to a place where they can see a path toward a brighter future. Each subcommittee will define focus area goals and ways to measure progress towards those goals. With a supportive structure and common direction, these subcommittees all possess the authority and capacity to direct the execution of strategies for maximum positive impact on vulnerable children and families in the state.



The Hope Toolset

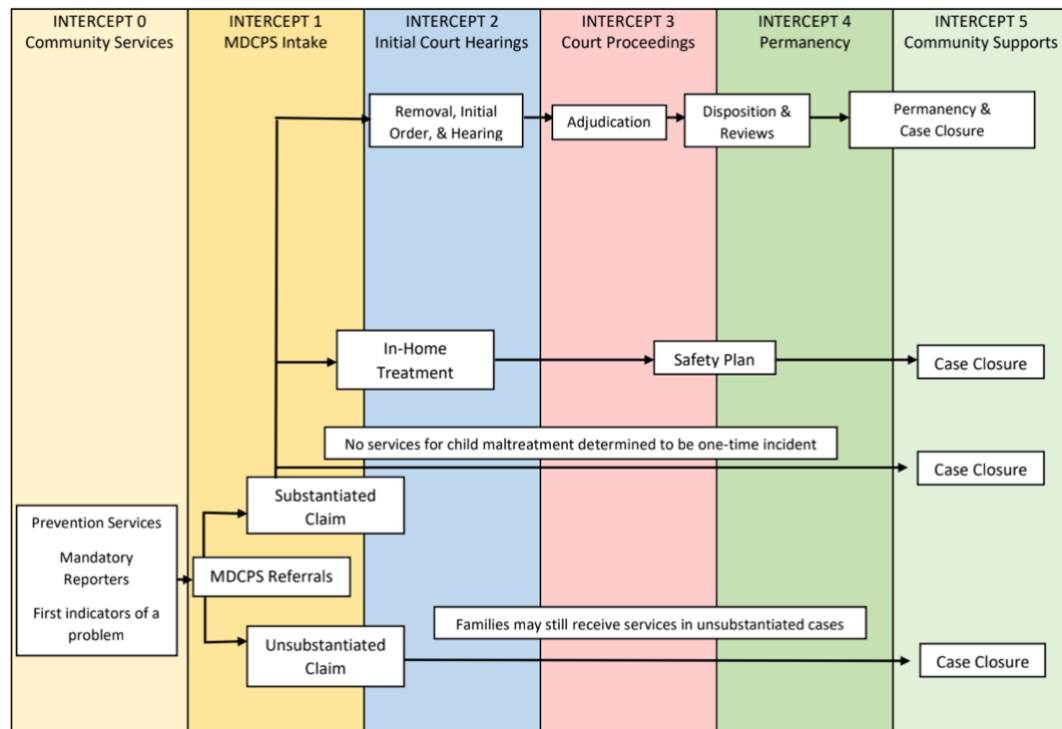
Looking to implement this wide-scale change is not an easy task and is not one that can be done in isolation. It takes the collective work of diverse, cross-sector actors to deliver meaningful results. The CCJ is turning to a framework called collective impact.¹⁶ Leadership for the MFFI has proposed multiple tools to further the work within the theory of hope – currently being tested and utilized by the Programs of HOPE subcommittees:

- 1) **Sequential Intercept Model Mapping.** The Sequential Intercept Model is a method of thinking that lays out systems in a sequential order. In the past, this model has been applied to the criminal justice system.¹⁷ The MFFI adapted the tool to the child welfare context in order to: 1) familiarize stakeholders through a visual depiction of state intervention in families and 2) bring focus to stakeholder analyses of community strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

¹⁶ <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact>

¹⁷ Massachusetts Community Justice Project

SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL APPLIED TO CHILD WELFARE



- 2) **Community Opportunity Maps.** Another resource the MFFI and its local committees are using is the Community Opportunity Map developed and provided by Casey Family Programs. This interactive tool allows for the examination of community indicators associated with safe children and strong families at geographic levels that are more meaningful to local stakeholders. Programs of HOPE subcommittee members are encouraged to use this tool to identify vulnerability within a community and use those data-based insights to inform decision-making, strategic intervention, calls to action, and stakeholder engagement across the HOPE focus areas.
- 3) **The Hope Score Survey.** In order to track the progress of the MFFI and the Programs of HOPE, the effort is working to implement the Hope Score Survey. This survey will be administered to family members at the beginning of services or involvement in the child welfare system and it will be administered again after the family has completed any court-mandated activity or is no longer in need of the services provided them.

Each Programs of HOPE subcommittee will contend with a series of guiding questions:

- What are we doing that is working?
- What do we need to improve upon?
- What are the biggest concerns of vulnerable children, youth, and families?
- What are the community concerns in this area?
- What does success look like?
- How can we create sustainable change?

Moving the Needle on Community Collaboration

The CCJ aims to move the needle through community collaboration by using the principles of collective impact and other proven collaborations using similar framework. Research by The Bridgespan Group isolates elements from successful collaborations that accelerate social impact.¹⁸ This Blueprint adopts those elements and lists their findings (with adjustment for the CCJ's purposes) as follows:

Operating principles

- Commitment to long-term, multi-year involvement by members of the collaborative, because long-term change takes time and a change direction must be sustained.
- Engagement of constituent voices and community members as substantive partners in equitable ranking with state-level key stakeholders across sectors, including individual youth, parents, and caregivers with lived experience, decisionmakers from government, business and nonprofits.
- Use of shared data to set the agenda and guide collaborative decision-making in an improvement direction over time.

Beyond these principles common to effective collaboratives, five common elements—keys to success—have been proven essential to success have been identified through collective impact research and work.

Keys to Success

Stakeholders will expand and build on:

1. **Common Agenda,**
2. **Shared Measurement Systems,**
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities,**
4. **Continuous Communication, and**
5. **Backbone Support Organizations.**

These are accomplished through:

- A shared vision and agenda are vital and must be supported by quantifiable goals that can catalyze support and build momentum and a clear roadmap to help the collaborative and its constituent members pursue broad goals rather than narrow institutional interests. Developing a common vision and agenda is time-consuming and challenging. It requires an investment of time to build trusting relationships among the various leaders and

¹⁸ Adapted from The Bridgespan Group, *Needle-Moving Community Collaboratives: A Promising Approach to Addressing America's Biggest Challenges*, <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/initiatives/transformative-scale/needle-moving-community-collaborative-s-a-promisin>.

interests represented in the collaborative and a commitment to be held accountable. It also involves extensive research and data-collection and sharing to understand the contours of a complex problem and how systems will need to shift over time.

- Strong leadership and effective governance are needed to fully engage stakeholders and coordinate their efforts, particularly for a longer duration that can generate and sustain change. The collaborative leader(s) must be highly-respected by the community and viewed as neutral, honest brokers. Those leaders must work to create and maintain a diverse and inclusive group that integrates authentic voices.
- Resources must be aligned toward what works and data must be used to continually adapt the collaborative's approach based on new information, changes in conditions, and data on progress against goals.
- A dedicated staff capacity and structure appropriate to the collaborative's plans and goals, and resources directed to the following roles:
 - Convening -- bringing partners together and maintaining a cohesive vision for the group
 - Facilitation – maintaining momentum, guiding participants, and facilitating the group toward goals
 - Data collection – aggregating and analyzing data
 - Communications – managing internal and external communications to make sure participants are kept well-informed
 - Administrative support
- Sufficient funding is required to maintain dedicated staff and ensure the collaborative functions and fulfills its goals.

And, for collaboratives that aim higher, beyond success to thriving, research points to the following:

Keys to Thriving

- Increasing the visibility and legitimacy of a collaborative's work
- Supporting policy and environmental change
- Providing knowledge and implementation support
- Funding for collaborative infrastructure and implementation support
- Advocating for greater community partnership

PHASES OF WORK

Using the tools described above, the subcommittees will move through three phases of work to address these guiding questions:

I. Investigative Phase: Framing and Focusing Our Work

- Determine and prioritize child and youth well-being indicators that we as a community can believe in, commit to, and take action on
- Collect and prioritize critical pieces of data from multiple fields and stakeholders
- Reflect on and assess how we as a community are doing in relation to the identified indicators and data

II. Issues and Opportunities Identification Phase: Clarifying Our Vision

- Think big and set bolder, more comprehensive goals for children and youth
- Identify issues or barriers that could impact established goals
- Identify opportunities to better leverage our existing resources and community partners

III. Strategy Development Phase: Creating an Actionable Plan

- Set strategies that work across stakeholders and seek to align existing policies and resources
- Research and investigate best practices both locally and nationally to identify successful strategies
- Create focus-area hypotheses and case for change
- Create solutions that engage young people and families and increase public, private and corporate demand

Next Steps

Using this approach, the CCJ's membership and subcommittees will recommend strategies for achieving positive change across child and youth outcome areas. Ongoing projects and next steps are outlined below.

RESOURCE MAPPING

Through the Programs of HOPE, there is an effort to actively map and update resources throughout the state. A joint subcommittee called Pathways of Hope was created to tackle this enormous goal, drawing expertise from each Programs of HOPE subcommittee. This committee drafted a four-stage plan and currently are focused on the first phase. Members circulated a survey to six pilot counties: Bolivar, Jackson, Oktibbeha, Panola, Rankin, and Warren. Within these counties, school resource officers and youth court staff are filling out this form in order to begin compiling an updated resource list for their community. The remaining three phases for this effort include analyzing the results of the resource form and adjusting in order to expand to new counties, analyzing and building a resource interface for public use, and scaling up for state-wide roll out. Initial conversations are underway with Google and NIC MS on how they can assist in making these resource maps and databases go live online and through phone applications once it is ready for roll out.

In addition to this four-stage plan, the Administrative Office of Courts is applying for a resource mapping grant from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. If granted, the NCJFCJ project will inform and enhance efforts already underway through POH committee members. Over the next four months, NCJFCJ resources with select teams of local, judicially lead stakeholders will work to 1) understand and use existing services, 2) identify gaps in services, and 3) target resources to fill these gaps. The efforts will result in localized resource maps and companion resource directories along with implementation and sustainability plans.

CCJ CENTRAL WEBSITE

Research and development are underway for a stand-alone website for the CCJ. Inspired by the Access to Justice Commission, the CCJ website design aims to be an easily accessible one-stop-shop of resources and information. It will outline all of the entities, partnerships, and subcommittees living within the CCJ and participating in this document. The first step in this process will create a free template website with NIC MS. It will be a basic shell that supports a fair amount of information. As the resource mapping and database are more defined, the website will need to be customized in order to host these components online.

Examples of template sites and inspiration for the free CCJ site include:

- <https://www.coronavirus.ms.gov/>
- <https://www.jobfairs.ms.gov/>
- <https://www.houston.ms.gov/>
- <http://www.msatjc.org/>

APPENDIX A

Serial: **222631****IN THE SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI****No. 89-R-99037-SCT*****IN RE: COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S
JUSTICE*****FILED****FEB 14 2019**OFFICE OF THE CLERK
SUPREME COURT
COURT OF APPEALS**EN BANC ORDER**

Before this Court en banc is the matter of children's justice in the State of Mississippi. This Court receives an annual federal Court Improvement Plan Grant, earmarked for the improvement of Mississippi's Youth Court system. A requirement for the receipt of the funds is that an advisory group be utilized to assist in the identification of areas needing improvement in the children's justice issues, as well as making recommendations for improvement of those areas and monitoring the implementation of the recommended reforms.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. The Court hereby charges the Commission on Children's Justice with developing a statewide comprehensive approach to identify areas needing improvement in children's justice issues, as well as making recommendations for improvement of those areas and monitoring the implementation of the recommended reforms.

2. The following are selected as members of the Commission, subject to their agreement to serve:

Justice Dawn H. Beam, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of Mississippi;

Judge Latrice Westbrook, Mississippi Court of Appeals;

Judge Tom Broome, County Court Judge, Rankin County;

Judge Rhea Sheldon, Chancery Judge 10th District

Randy G. Pierce, Executive Director of the Mississippi Judicial College;

David Calder, Director of Children's Advocacy Clinic, University of Mississippi Law School;

Shirley Kennedy, Director of Children's Advocacy Program, Mississippi College School of Law;

Dr. Scott Benton, Professor of Pediatrics, Director, Division of Forensic Medicine, Medical Director, Children's Safe Center, University of Mississippi Medical Center;

Dr. Beverly Bryant, Chair, Department of Child Psychology, University of Mississippi Medical Center;

Angela Robertson, Associate Director and Research Professor, Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University;

Dr. Lisa Nored, Chair, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Southern Mississippi;

Paula Broome, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Victims Assistance, Mississippi Office of the Attorney General;

Patti Marshall, Bureau of Victims Assistance, Special Assistant Attorney General, Mississippi Office of the Attorney General;

Sandra Parks, Bureau Chief, Children's Division of Mississippi Department of Mental Health;

Craig Robertson, Co-Founder of 200 Million Flowers;

Amy Wilson, Executive Director, CASA Mississippi;

John Davis, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Human Services;

Jess H. Dickinson, Commissioner, Department of Child Protection Services;

Lyndsy Irwin, Director of Child Support Enforcement, Mississippi Department of Human Services;

Toni Kersh, Bureau Director, Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement, Mississippi Department of Education;

James Maccarone, Director, Division of Youth Services, Mississippi Department of Human Services;

Michael McPhail, Retired, County Court and Youth Court Judge, Forrest County;

Judge Sharon Sigalas, County Court and Youth Court Judge, Jackson County;

Judge Vel Young-Graham, County Court and Youth Court Judge, Lauderdale County;

Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, Chancellor of the First Chancery District of Mississippi;

Judge Kevin Briscoe, Chief Justice, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;

Judge Holly Denson, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;

Ginger Mathis Miller, County Attorney, Tate County;

Karla Tye, Executive Director, Mississippi Children's Advocacy Centers;

Devin Loggins, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi United Methodist Children's Homes;

John Damon, Director, Canopy Children's Solutions;

Angelique C. White, Guardian Ad Litem, Gulfport, Mississippi;

Nicole McLaughlin, Executive Director of the Access to Justice Commission and Director of MS Bar's Access to Justice Initiative;

Andre deGruy, Office of the State Public Defender;

Judge John Hudson, Jurist in Residence, Mississippi Supreme Court.

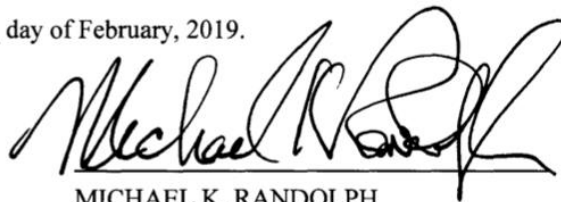
3. In undertaking its tasks, the Commission shall review such reports, studies, and materials as it deems appropriate, study legislation, analyze the use of court improvement

funds, and submit recommendations to the En Banc Conference of the Mississippi Supreme Court for any necessary changes to improve the court systems for children.

4. Justice Dawn Beam, Judge Rhea Sheldon and Judge Thomas Broome are appointed Co-Chairs.

5. The Clerk of the Supreme Court shall spread this order upon the minutes of the Court and transmit a true copy to each appointee.

SO ORDERED, this the 11 day of February, 2019.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael K. Randolph", is written over a horizontal line.

MICHAEL K. RANDOLPH
CHIEF JUSTICE
FOR THE COURT

APPENDIX B

Commission on Children's Justice Organizational Chart

Commission Co-Chairs	Justice Dawn Beam Judge Rhea Sheldon Judge Thomas Broome
Focus Areas and Subcommittees	Court Improvement Grant Distribution Parent Representation Mississippi Family First Initiative Programs of HOPE
Commission Membership	
Judge Latrice Westbrook Randy G. Pierce David Calder Shirley Kennedy Dr. Scott Benton Dr. Beverly Bryant Angela Robertson Dr. Lisa Nored Paula Broome Craig Robertson Amy Wilson Bob Anderson Taylor Cheeseman Lyndsy Irwin Judge Sharon Sigalas Judge Vel Young-Graham Chancellor Jacqueline Mask Judge Kevin Briscoe Judge Holly Denson Karla Tye Devon Loggins John Damon Nicole McLaughlin Andre DeGruy Judge John Hudson	Mississippi Court of Appeals Mississippi Judicial College University of Mississippi School of Law Mississippi College School of Law University of Mississippi Medical Center University of Mississippi Medical Center Mississippi State University University of Southern Mississippi Mississippi Office of Attorney General 200 Million Flowers CASA Mississippi Mississippi Department of Human Services Department of Child Protection Services Mississippi Department of Human Services Jackson County Youth Court Lauderdale County Youth Court First Chancery District of Mississippi Chief Justice, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Mississippi Children's Advocacy Centers Mississippi United Methodist Children's Homes Canopy Children's Solutions Access to Justice Commission Office of the State Public Defender Jurist-in-Residence, Mississippi Supreme Court